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BALLET TODAY

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PETER REVITT'S

BALLET GUYED

with a foreword by MARY CLARKE

is a book of brilliant caricatures of the leading dancers of the day. Peter Revitt's work needs no introduction to readers of "BALLET TODAY" and his genius for the witty comment in line is here crystallised in 36 dazzling sketches including Margot Fonteyn, Moira Shearer, Beryl Grey, Michael Somes, Violetta Elvin, Alexander Grant.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

1952 seems to be upon us almost before we have become accustomed to the idea that 1950 is gone with, and I think a large proportion of readers will agree with me when I say my most sincere wish for the world of ballet in 1952 is the wish for a revitalising influence; 1951 in London has shown us a spate of Indian and Spanish dancers but little of true birth or promise within the confines of the classical ballet. The only resounding success of the year came early, with John Cranko's *Pineapple Poll*: other new works have been given mixed receptions by critics and audiences alike and the general lethargy has extended even to the faithful audience at Covent Garden—on the opening night of the current season (November 21st) there were empty seats in the Stalls and Stalls Circle. With Fonteyn and Shearer both absent, it seemed extraordinary to introduce a new season with a programme that gave us neither Grey or Gomes—surely this was a case for *The Sleeping Beauty* with Grey, Gomes, May and Elvin. Even *Billabie* seemed to have lost its old sparkle, and this ballet is not improved by the casting changes it has offered: while Dale is a worthy substitute for Negus, the increase in the number of dancers involved has lessened the impact of the work and it is now less of a ballet and more of a divertissement. To me the outstanding performance on the opening night was given by Pamela May, whom we were glad to see back once again in *Don Quixote*, with all her famous purity of line and with emotion and warmth added. This ballerina has gifts of maturity, graciousness and charm which distinguish her from her fellows: and mature artists are the ingredient at present lacking in our National Ballet.

It is usual at the New Year to formulate good resolutions: while making a few of my own (for example, to do my best in collaboration with my fellow Associate Editors to keep up the standards of *Ballet Today* while achieving the phenomenal aim of maintaining the price at a reasonable figure), I would like to suggest with all deference to directors of ballet companies that they, for their part, resolve to do their utmost to produce something new for their audiences, and not merely rest on their laurels. And while we are on the subject of resting, might I also suggest that if nothing new is on the stocks, it might be advisable to let dead choreographers rest in peace? Petipa and Fokine are still more interesting in the raw than when they are altered, rearranged and generally tinkered out of all recognition.

DERYCK LYNHAM

The death of Deryck Lynham in Lausanne on November 2nd is a great loss to the world of serious ballet criticism. Mr. Lynham was one of the few writers on ballet who was prepared to put the research of years into a book, and his *Ballet Then and Now*, a valuable reference work, and his study of Noverre are indispensable to any ballet library.

LES MAINS JOLY

On page 20 readers will find an introduction to a new art. Half-way between ballet and puppetry, *Les Mains Joly* have taken Paris by storm and are now appearing in New York, after their presentation on London television. This unique and delicate form of mime is obviously unsuitable for any but the most intimate form of presentation, but in a theatre such as the Mercury they might cause a sensation equal to that aroused in Paris by their nightclub appearances.

VAGANOVA

On page 7 Miss B. M. Henry writes on Agrippina Vaganova, the Russian teacher whose fame was world-wide and who died in November at the age of seventy-two.

The author of this article recently returned to London from Moscow, where she spent four years at the British Embassy. During that time she had numerous opportunities of seeing Vaganova's most famous pupils, and of appreciating the unique role played by Vaganova in Soviet Ballet.

J.S.

The photograph on the cover is of the members of the Compagnie Yves Joly, creators of "Les Mains Joly", and is by William MacQuitty.

THERE NEEDS NO GHOST . . .

ALAN STOREY REVIEWS DONALD OF THE BURTHENS

CHOREOGRAPHERS, unlike other men, do not die. They are suddenly, and at no determinable point in time, extinguished. One moment their work shines clearly and steadily; the next moment it is gone, leaving a forlorn image to melt upon the retina and flood the mind with iridescent ghosts. Sometimes such ghosts counterfeit their past reality so palpably that the mind is momentarily bewitched into acceptance, until the cocks crow and inevitable disillusion follows. Nowadays, alas, the flames seem no sooner lit than blown out. The stage is haunted by the still-born. The ballet-goer sinks ever deeper into the atmosphere of a seance.

On Wednesday, December 12th, 1951, the spirit of Massine reappeared at Covent Garden and, judging by the respectful applause which greeted the visitation, succeeded almost completely in bringing off the little deception already alluded to. Nevertheless a ghost it was; and in my opinion a somewhat inconsequential one at that.

Inconsequence is indeed the principal defect of the piece, and presumably it derives from an initial indecisiveness, an uncertainty of purpose on Massine's part, which is responsible not only for the conflict of choreographic styles but also for the curious air of aloofness—of detachment even—in the music, decor and costumes. Massine's primary intention presumably was to compose a *ballet d'action* in a Scottish dance-idiom based on a native theme similar to *Le Tricorne* and *Union Pacific*. But in effect the narration of the ballet is perfunctory to the point of unintelligibility and its eventual atrophy some time before the actual end of the piece is a matter of complete indifference to all concerned. To some extent the involved nature of the theme is responsible, for it contains certain elements which cannot possibly be translated into either mimetic or choreographic terms: the conditions, for instance, which surround Donald's pact with Death in the first scene, and upon which the significance of the scene at the King's deathbed depends. And yet I cannot help feeling that Massine's choreographic rendering of these episodes is needlessly wilful.

The action of *Donald*, unlike that of *Tricorne*—or even so lightly strung a ballet as *La Boutique Fantasque*—does not evolve naturally from the dance but is, on the contrary, isolated by a series of static *divertissements* which retard rather than advance the dramatic development. One serious consequence

of this is the absence—so remarkable in a Massine ballet—of both individual and group characterisation. Donald and Death remain throughout most unconvincing creatures. The nature of the former cannot be developed because it is never precisely stated. Mr. Alexander Grant dances him in a state of vacuomatic bliss which automatically precludes any tendency to emotional excess. Exactly why Death should find his soul so worthy of possession is a matter for conjecture. But then the abstract being so excellently danced by Miss Beryl Grey is no less baffling. Without the assistance of a programme note it would certainly be difficult to identify it as anything but a fugitive from one of the symphonic ballets. Massine's delight in plastic eccentricity clearly went to his head in the creation of this part; so much so that he has unconsciously dropped into self-parody in his enthusiasm.

By far the most interesting moments in *Donald* are those devoted to the ensembles. Indeed they provide what little vitality the ballet possesses and, perhaps more to the point so far as our dancers are concerned, ample opportunity for unbroken stretches of uninhibited dance. That they too are not completely successful is again due to the overall absence of characterisation; in this instance to the severe anonymity of the groupings and linear design which provides no outlet for individual expression. Massine it seems, has captured the technique but not the spirit of Scottish dancing in his translation, and in the omission has contrived to destroy its essential

(Continued on page 18, col. 2)

Bouquet of the Month



For our January bouquet we are forsaking the classical ballet and making the presentation to a member of the *South Pacific* cast—Betta St. John, for her performance as Liat and more particularly her delicious mime in *Happy Talk*.



THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL THEATRE BALLET'S PRODUCTION OF SWAN LAKE, ACT II, STAGED BY JOYCE GRAEME.
LYNNE GOLDING IS SEEN AS ODETTE, PARTNERED BY HENRY DANTON AS PRINCE SIEGFRIED

BALLET IN AUSTRALIA

By EUGENE F. CUSACK

AFTER something of a slump in the immediate post-war years, ballet in Australia has re-established itself, greatly re-vitalised, and much more securely based than previously.

The temporary decline can be traced to a variety of causes—the lack of theatres; the dispersal of the original Borovansky Company, and to the formation of smaller, experimental groups working on more or less non-professional lines. Certainly it was not due to any weakening of public interest. For from the golden days of the De Basil visits of 1938-39-40, ballet has been one of the best drawcards in the Australian theatre . . . a tradition still being perpetuated. The recent Sydney season of the new Borovansky Company created an all-time record for ballet in Australia with a three months' run at Sydney's spacious Empire Theatre—seating capacity 2,500; in all 200,000 attending the season. Likewise the National Theatre Ballet enjoyed capacity audiences at its Jubilee Season in Melbourne earlier

in the year, with the theatre booked out weeks ahead.

Strongest fillip to ballet during the lean post-war period was Ballet Rambert's visit of 1948-49. Not only did it serve to maintain and further stimulate public enthusiasm, but more valuable still, it left behind several well-equipped dancers to provide the nucleus of a new and permanent company attached to the National Theatre. So emerged the National Theatre Ballet on a full-time basis, which since its formation has toured most Australian capitals, as well as bringing ballet to many provincial centres for the first time, and is at present on a tour of New Zealand.

Director of the company is Joyce Graeme, late of Rambert, with co-director and principal dancer, Rex Reid who previously had danced with Rambert and other leading companies. Reid was responsible for the choreography of *Corroboree*, music by John Antill and decor by William Constable, which this com-

pany produced for the first time at their Sydney season last year.

The ballet still remains a controversial issue. Its critics assert its interest lies rather in Antill's exciting score, and that Reid's choreography is unsympathetic and repetitious. As vigorously, its supporters declare it an outstanding achievement—choreography, decor and music blending in genuine ballet synthesis. A smaller, but no less colourful offering of Reid's—*Les Belles Crèoles*, set in a New Orleans creole bar in the nineties, to music of Aaron Copland, is also in the company's repertoire.

Another new ballet introduced by this company during their recent season was *The Listeners* by Adelaide choreographer Joanne Prieste, on a theme suggested by de la Mare's poem to music by Dohnanyi. Highlight of the season, however, was the brilliant four-act production of *Swan Lake*, reconstructed and directed by Joyce Graeme with beautifully imaginative decor by Ann Church. It brought almost overnight fame—eighteen curtain calls on the opening night!—to a young dancer of brilliance and great promise in Lynne Golding, dancing the dual role of Odette and Odile. Golding commands a taut, polished technique and interpretative sensibility of a high order. She was finely partnered by Henry Danton, from Sadler's Wells, as Prince Siegfried.

Coupled to the success of this company in reinstating Australian Ballet, is the very welcome reorganisation of the Borovansky Company, pioneers of ballet in this country. To Edouard Borovansky, late of the Pavlova and De Basil Companies, and favoured partner of the great Pavlova herself, ballet in Australia owes more than to any other individual. The dissolution of his company after the war seemed to spell the deathblow to all hopes of developing a national ballet, so that news of the re-formation of the company, with the gathering together of many of his former dancers from home and abroad—Dorothy Stevenson, Kathleen Gorham, Edna Busse, Peggy Sager and Martin Rubinstein, and the importation of others such as Miro Zloch, Charles Boyd and Paul Grinwis, was news indeed. The season has included the first full-scale production in Australia of *Petrouchka*, and has been noteworthy for the first presentation of a new four-scene ballet on a local theme—*The Outlaw*, choreography by Borovansky himself, to music specially written for it by Melbourne composer Vernon Williams, and with decor by William Constable. Inspiration for the ballet is drawn from incidents in the career of Ned Kelly, king of Australian bushrangers. With its spoken prologue and strong emphasis on mime, as well as its controversial subject matter, it has produced as

much heated comment almost, as *Corroboree* did earlier.

More traditional in treatment, but drawing similarly on local history for theme, is *The Black Swan* also by Borovansky to music of Sibelius, included in the company's repertoire. Like Douglas Stewart's verse play *Shipwreck*, its material derives from the early Dutch exploration of Australia's west coast.

Borovansky is primarily concerned with ballet as the means of working out or expressing an idea, so that his work is never merely narrative or programmatic. Now a naturalised Australian, he is deeply concerned with the development of a national ballet—national in the sense that it shall draw sustenance and inspiration from the traditions and environment surrounding it. His latest works reflect this, and others projected, deriving their inspiration from the short stories of Henry Lawson, evidence a similar interest.

Under the leadership of Laurel Martyn, who danced with many companies abroad, including solo roles with Sadler's Wells and Borovansky, this group, primarily concerned with experimentation and providing opportunities for choreographers, is becoming increasingly important on the ballet scene. It conducts classes in country centres, has more than 500 students, and is backed by a state government grant. Recent acquisition to its teaching staff is New Australian, Boris Romanoff from the Maryinsky Theatre.

Over the past decade or so, and more recently, Australian Ballet has benefited by the arrival of several dancers from abroad, who have strengthened existing companies, or formed smaller groups no less concerned with establishing ballet in this country. These include Mischa Burlakov's First Australian Ballet, and the Polish-Australian Ballet, directed by Raissa Kousnetsova, former soloist of the Bolshoi Theatre, Moscow. Erast Dorochenko has joined the latter company.

And in this respect, too, if in a somewhat different category, one cannot possibly overlook the invaluable work and achievement of the Bodenweiser Ballet—exponents of modern, expressive dancing. Now permanently located in Australia, M. Gertrud Bodenweiser has formed a full-time company, which apart from regular Australian seasons and country tours, has recently completed successful tours of South Africa and New Zealand, and plans to tour India in the near future. Described recently by an overseas critic as "holding an important place in the international world of dance", the ballet has done much to stimulate an interest in ballet generally, and no summary of the Australian ballet scene, however brief, could omit reference to its achievements.



AGRIPPINA VAGANOVA—AN EARLY PHOTOGRAPH

AGRIPPINA VAGANOVA 1879-1951

By B. M. HENRY

AT the end of November Agrippina Vaganova died in Leningrad. Ballerina and teacher, she had been awarded the titles of Stalin Prize Winner, Peoples' Artist and Professor of Choreography.

She was born in St. Petersburg and graduated from the ballet school to the *corps de ballet* of the Maryinsky Theatre in 1897. Among her teachers were Ivanov, Gerdt, Vazem and Preobrajenska. Three years were spent in the *corps de ballet* and from 1900 onwards the Soviet ballet source book "Materials for the History of the Russian Ballet" records annual increases in salary until 1910 when she was awarded a gold medal.

In 1912 she danced at the Opéra Comique in Paris and a notice appeared in *Figaro* acclaiming her "Star of the Petersburg Ballet".

Inevitably the question will be asked: "How did she compare with Pavlova?" The critic Volyinsky was perhaps one of Vaganova's greatest admirers and in 1912 he wrote in the *St. Petersburg Journal* that to estimate her real art she must be seen dancing alone. He considered that her variations would re-

main for ever among the legends of ballet art, and that history would place her name side by side with Trefilova, Pavlova and Preobrajenska and that Vaganova was second to Pavlova as a classical dancer.

Vaganova was awarded the title of Ballerina in 1915 and her roles included Odette and Odile in *Swan Lake*, the Princess in *Little Hunchbacked Horse* and the major part in *Chopiniana (Sylphides)*. The following year she appeared as Nile in *La Source* for her farewell benefit performance and was granted a pension.

Her teaching career began in 1917. From 1921 she was teacher of classical dancing in the Leningrad State Choreographic School and from 1922 taught the members of the ballet company.

In 1934 her "Basic Principles of Classical Ballet" was published. This was the first experiment in the U.S.S.R. of the creation of a text book of ballet technique and it has been adopted by all ballet schools in the U.S.S.R. Two editions were published before the Second World War and it has been translated into many languages. In 1948, on the occasion of her jubilee, to celebrate her fifty years' work in ballet, a new, improved and expanded edition was published. The Soviet editions are illustrated by photographs of Vaganova's pupils executing the steps and the third edition contains new photographs and a plan of a lesson with music for the exercises; but Vaganova always stressed that a decisive part was played by the experience and sensibility of the teacher.

Vaganova was famous in the U.S.S.R. as a solo dancer, distinguished by virtuosity and complete mastery of the technique of classical dancing. She was an inspired teacher who taught her pupils that part of the secret of good technique was contained in acquiring the correct position of the spine. Each pupil was studied individually and was helped to develop her own talent.

Vaganova's method bore fruit a very few years after she began to teach. The list of her gifted pupils is long and includes a very large number of the leading ballerinas on the Soviet stage. First to appear was the technically brilliant Semeonova. Then, in 1928, graduated the expressive and gifted Shelest, the real classical ballerina Dudinskaya—who once said to Vaganova—"How would I live had there been no dancing?"; and the lyrical Ulanova. Ulanova's technique is so perfect that it is not noticeable. She has been compared with Pavlova and it may be that Vaganova who danced in the same company as Pavlova and whose name has been linked with hers, has handed on to her pupil Ulanova the art which conceals art.



Photo : Baron

LIANE DAYDE AS SNOW WHITE IN SERGE LIFAR'S NEW BALLET.

Photo : Baron

DAYDE AS SNOW WHITE, LIFAR AS THE HUNTSMAN AND NINA VYROUBOVA AS THE WICKED QUEEN, IN *BLANCHE-NEIGE*



Photo : Baron

A SCENE FROM *BLANCHE-NEIGE* WITH (LEFT TO RIGHT): MAX BOZZONI, VYROUBOVA, LIFAR, CLAUDE BESSY, DAYDE AND JOSETTE CLAVIER

BLANCHE-NEIGE at the PARIS OPERA

By FERDINAND REYNA

ON November 14th the Paris Opéra presented *Blanche-Neige*, a ballet by Serge Lifar, with music by Maurice Yvain and sets and costumes by Bouchène. This three-act ballet, in several scenes, takes up the entire evening. The principal roles are interpreted by the *étoiles* Liane Daydé (Snow White) and Nina Vyroubova (The Wicked Queen). The Seven Dwarfs were danced by Franchetti, Efimoff, Bari, Touronde, Descombey, Auburtin and Romand. Andreani, as the Prince, had little to do but managed to make his part stand out. Three *grands sujets*, Bessy, Clavier and Rayet in the roles, respectively, of a dragonfly, a firefly, and the good fairy, acquitted themselves well, and the Opéra children (the 'rats') were also in evidence.

The ballet is too long and repetitive and the story unfolds in a way which is banal without, however, being completely boring. The choreography, generally speaking, has no special interest or novelty.

This was very disappointing because, the day before the *première*, Serge Lifar made some astounding declarations in the newspaper *Figaro*. In the same breath as he talked about UNO, peace and war, he promised nothing less than a choreographic revolution. But this revolution did not take place, or if it did, we did not notice it. The audience's expectations faded as the ballet proceeded. The work began with something of the spirit of a Grimm's fairy tale but the last scene borrowed its atmosphere from music-hall and seemed out of place in the setting and tradition of the Opéra.

Liane Daydé, who is, unfortunately, too small, danced well enough but did not make the part stand out in the way an *étoile* should. The real triumph of the evening was Nina Vyroubova, whose bearing and authority have improved lately. Her line is superb and her personality comes over very strongly—for example in a Hungarian dance, which she performed with amazing spirit.

Maurice Yvain's music did not please, alas. He has written many highly successful musical comedies, but was perhaps not very wise to take on a ballet. The score, which is full of repeats and is highly reminiscent, lacks originality and finesse.

On the other hand, Bouchène's sets and costumes were excellent, except for the last scene, where it may be that the artist's talents had to bow to the demands of the ballet's creators.

NEW DIRECTOR AT THE OPERA

M. Robert Hirsch has very recently relinquished his position as General Administrator of the *Réunion des théâtres lyriques nationaux de France*. M. Maurice Lehmann, a widely experienced man of the theatre, has been asked to replace him and will soon take up his position as principal director of the Opéra and Opéra Comique.

DE CUEVAS COMPANY IN PARIS

On November 3rd, at the Empire Theatre, Avenue Wagram, the Grand Ballet du Marquis de Cuevas opened its Paris season, which is to last about two months.

The company as a whole showed remarkable homogeneity. Rosella Hightower, the star of the company, is as good as ever; she is brilliant in the classical *pas de deux* and yet keeps her simplicity and does not strain after effect. George Zoritch, the young dancer engaged last year, is progressing well, to judge by his *Les Sylphides*. But Serge Golovine is still the real discovery. He has been given the classical *pas de deux* which display his wonderful gifts of elevation and nobility. He is as good in *Black Swan*, which he dances with Rosella Hightower, as he is in *Blue Bird*, with Harriet Toby. It was good to see George Skibine again, with his wife Marjorie Tallchief. Skibine has rare gifts of poetic expression and lyricism, while Tallchief has both a dreamy quality and liveliness. She is at home both as the mysterious *Somnambule* in Balanchine's ballet and in the technical acrobatics of the *pas de deux* from *Don Quixote*. The Company has now finished its period of 'running in' and the ensemble work together remarkably well.

The Company, which fills the theatre every night, is preparing three other important new works which will be presented during this season.

THE MARQUIS IS A MARQUIS!

The Marquis de Cuevas has brought to court a Paris evening paper which raised doubts as to the authenticity of his title and coat of arms. His lawyer, with parchments unfolded before the judges, was able to prove the authenticity of the titles of the Marquis de Cuevas, which go back to the 15th century. The newspaper had to pay damages and costs. So any doubt is no longer permissible. The Marquis de Cuevas is really a marquis!

ROSARIO AND ANTONIO



PETER REVITT'S BALLET GUYED—ROSARIO AND ANTONIO

The celebrated Spanish dancers, Rosario and Antonio, appeared for the second time this year at the Cambridge Theatre in a season which lasted from November 12th to December 15th. As before, they carried the whole programme of dancing themselves while interludes were provided by two fine pianists and three guitarists, amongst whom Juan Garcia de la Mata was outstanding.

Once again Antonio's *zapateado* was the great virtuoso feat of the season and in this and the formal *Goyescas* he danced with complete dedication. In the pure dances and in the character numbers both Rosario and Antonio gave excellent performances but I personally found them less pleasing in such numbers as the *Zorongo Gitano* and the excerpts from

El Amor Brujo which have a cheap cabaret sensationalism and are unworthy of such intrinsically fine dancers.

As in the summer, the London critics were very divided in their opinions of the season. Some eminent men and women accorded whole-hearted praise to the dancers, particularly to Antonio, while some others, equally eminent, took a less enthusiastic view of the artistic worth of the programme. The public paid its money and found much of the programme obviously to its choice. Among the many rapturous comments overheard in bar and foyer, none was more spontaneous than that of the white-haired old lady who exclaimed almost tearfully to her companion, "Oh, my dear, isn't he *exactly* like Ivor Novello". M.C.

MORE NEWS FROM THE THEATRE BALLET

MAURICE METLISS AND MICHAEL HOGAN SEND A JOINT ACCOUNT OF THEIR TRAVELS TO JANET SINCLAIR.

Dear Janet,

One of our most interesting excursions before leaving Detroit, Michigan, was a visit to the great Chrysler automobile plant. The assembly line is fabulous: the engine is assembled by means of an overhead conveyor belt, the chassis is then added and when the wheels and so on are added a neat device turns the whole thing the right way up. Of course it would take many pages to describe all the intricate details of the process—yet from commencement to the time when the car is driven away the entire operation takes exactly eighty minutes. Several models are handled, and how the mechanics ever keep track of them is a mystery to me. Most of the cars on this line are customer-built models: this means that the customer orders his car from a dealer, stating type of car, body, engine, colour, upholstery, etc., and the factory makes the car to that order—in fact you could order a car, go for a walk and when you come back it would be ready to drive away!

I must add a word of praise here for the personnel who showed unbelievable patience in answering all the questions we fired at them. Don Britton and Stan Holden of course tried to take things apart as soon as they were put together, much to the amusement of the workers, many of whom had seen the ballet on the previous evening.

East Lansing was our next destination and the weather began to get cold. East Lansing is a charming place. The company stayed outside the town at the Michigan State College, in a very new hotel called the Kellogg Centre which was donated to the College by the famous corn-flake manufacturer. The hotel is very modern and run entirely by students learning hotel management.

Minneapolis, our next stop, was really cold and not far above zero. The Northrop Auditorium where we played is one of the many magnificent buildings standing on the grounds of the University of Minnesota. Travelling there on the street car to St. Paul, the adjoining city, meant crossing the Mississippi: we saw no show-boats, only black water with great lumps of ice floating on the current.

Our next call was Milwaukee, where we had a lot of snow: the air was cold and dry, and the snow like powder. This is a town for beer—all the big brewers have factories in this town.

We arrived in Omaha at one o'clock on the afternoon of November 8th, and almost at once Arnott Mader was organising a trip to the famous "Boys' Town" inaugurated by a Father Flanagan thirty-four years ago and made world-famous in the movie of the same name. Father Flanagan started this home with five boys and a borrowed ninety dollars: it now spreads over hundreds of acres with many modern buildings and houses nine hundred boys. They are taught every conceivable trade (except ballet dancing). Most of the boys are orphans, but twenty per cent. are from reform schools.

Denver, Salt Lake City and Seattle were next on the list, and we arrived in Vancouver, B.C., to find that we had made box-office history, as we were sold out for the entire week at the highest prices ever charged there. All the ballets received enthusiastic receptions in this town, *Capriol Suite* being a particular favourite. *Casse Noisette* too is very popular, and I think we are all dancing it better than we did in London: Svetlana's Sugar Plum Fairy has been one of the major successes of the tour. Trecu is dancing the Prince in *Casse* with Maryon Lane for the first time; it is perhaps Donald Britton who has improved most of everyone on this tour in every role he performs: his solo in Act III of *Coppelia* is going to cause a major sensation in London when we get back there.

That's about all for the present: it's three o'clock in the morning and time we got some sleep!

Yours very sincerely,

Maurice and Michael.

A Restoration at the Opera

On December 14th the Paris Opéra restored the travesty role of Franz in *Coppelia* when it was danced by Paulette Dynalix. The role of Franz, originally designed for a woman and danced by Mlle. E. Fiocre at the first performance in 1870, had been preserved as a travesty role at the Opéra until 1951 when it was danced there for the first time by a man, Jean Paul Andreani. This caused much trepidation among the *abonnés*, who felt the traditions of the Opera were being attacked at their very foundations, and the restoration has caused corresponding rejoicing.

HIGHLIGHTS OF 1951

Looking back over the year 1951 in London, we came to the conclusion that although we had spent most of our evenings watching dancing of one kind or another, very little of it was going to endure long in our memories. Accordingly, in an attempt to sift a little of the chaff away, we asked leading critics in some of the big ballet capitals to tell us what they thought would prove to be the memorable events of the year. Their replies are given below; we should like to stress that only highlights have been listed and this is by no means an attempt to record everything that happened.

★ LONDON

What particularly distinguishes 1951 from other years is the Spanish invasion, which has in turn acquainted us with Rosario and Antonio, José Greco and his company, and Pilar Lopez's Ballet Espagnol which, apart from the director herself, presented four excellent male dancers: Ximenés, Vargas, Lorca, and Vega. Among foreign companies we had a visit of the revived Ballets des Champs-Élysées, with Jacqueline Moreau as guest artist, the Grand Ballet du Marquis de Cuevas which introduced Serge Golovine, whose *élévation*, *pirouettes*, and *tours en l'air* aroused admiration. This year has also seen the foundation of Ballet Workshop and the resurrection of the Original Ballet Russe.

The most successful ballet of the year was Cran-ko's *Pineapple Poll* in which David Blair was outstanding as Captain Belaye. Among other interesting interpretations were Fonteyn's Chloé in *Daphnis and Chloé*, Fifi's Pineapple Poll, Hinton's Myrtha and Polovtsian Girl, and Stanley Holden's Pierrot in *Harlequin in April*. **CYRIL W. BEAUMONT**

★ NEW YORK

The year 1951 will go down into history as the time of the definite establishment of the New York City Ballet as the major force in American Ballet. This was achieved by a three-fold accomplishment:

The troupe has augmented its repertoire with capital works by George Balanchine (*La Valse*, *Tyl Ulenspiegel*, *Apollo*, and *Swan Lake*, Act 2), Jerome Robbins (*The Cage*), Antony Tudor (*Lilac Garden*), and Todd Bolender (*The Miraculous Mandarin*), some of them universally accepted as great, others controversial, none insignificant, trite or done for the sake of expediency. It has received into its fold and provided the means of expression to Nora Kaye and André Eglevsky, outstanding dancers and sensitive artists, who added immeasurably to its artistic strength. Finally, it had enriched New York with an almost continuous ballet season, dancing in February-March, June, September, and November-December.

ANATOLE CHUJOY

★ PARIS

The most striking impression that I have received during the past year's ballet-going in Paris was Agnes de Mille's *Fall River Legend*, given by Ballet Theatre, as performed by Nora Kaye. In this ballet the choreographer added to some memorable dance patterns a psychological drama of profound truth. She has succeeded admirably, too, in the construction of a work of art upon so difficult and novel a theme. We are so often given the opportunity merely to amuse ourselves at the ballet that our attention is the more seized by a work of such significance. In *Fall River Legend* there are no superfluities to distract our minds from the intimate drama of this poor girl, a drama which achieves the heights of a classic tragedy. The fact that ballet can treat such a theme and develop it with such success is proof that the art of ballet is still in a healthy state of development.

Nora Kaye's interpretation of Lizzie was outstanding: here is a real dancer, who can wring our hearts, and not through facial expression alone.

Speaking generally, I must add that Ballet Theatre's performances to me were the choreographic event of the year.

FERDINAND REYNA

★ ITALY

In Italy the most striking event to me was the appearance in Florence of the Soviet dancer Galina Ulanova with her partner Kondratov. However, what can one say of ballet in Italy? We have been shown nothing new; even the ballets presented during the Florence Festival were those with which we had become already familiar in Paris, performed by dancers we knew in roles created for others. There has been nothing in Italy which holds out any hopes of an Italian ballet—although there are many promising dancers, to quote Giulio Perugini and Olga Amati alone among many: and there are several fine teachers working there. What is needed in Italy is a new interest in ballet to be shown by the directors of the various Opera Houses, and of this there is at present no trace.

FERDINAND REYNA

★ GERMANY

The highlight of the year was the reappearance of the Ballet Jooss (Essen, June) with a staple repertoire of revivals, plus new works from both Jooss and Hans Zullig—*Colombinade* showing Jooss in a gay satirical mood, balanced by Zullig's lyrical abstract *Fantasie*. The music used was admirable (Strauss/Schubert) but Rochus Gliese did not prove to be an outstanding designer.

September saw the emergence of a dance group under Yvonne Georgi in Dusseldorf, with Edel von Rothe, Marcel Luipart and Karl Heinz King in *Les Animaux Modèles* and *Carmina Burana*. Performances proved somewhat premature however (Jooss worked for eighteen months before presenting his new company in public) and it is to be hoped that Hamburg will fare better in the New Year, when Helga Swedlund launches her troupe, headed by Natasha Trofimova and Bico von Larszky in a programme consisting of *Firebird*, *Hamlet*, *The Golden Calf* and Werner Egk's *French Suite*.

J. STUART BARKER

★ HOLLAND

During the 1951 ballet season in Holland, it was Hima Kesarcodi who made by far the strongest impression. Though by no means an expert in Hindu dancing, I feel, however, that by her great technical skill, genuine artistry and intelligently built up programme Hima Kesarcodi is an outstanding exponent of this type of dancing: or indeed of dancing as a whole. One appreciates especially the honesty, and perhaps primarily the great modesty, with which this dancer approaches her art: she accomplishes the miracle of holding the attention of a full Western audience for a classical Bharatya Natyam dance lasting twenty minutes! Her dances of *Sorrow* and of *Fear* could be called "modern", and it is very remarkable to see how she has composed these dances in modern terms while retaining the technical basis of Hindu dancing, and fully succeeds in conveying to the audience the deepest sorrow and the uttermost fear.

I think that Kesarcodi's secret lies in the fact that she is not dancing to satisfy her personal ambitions, but because she must fulfil her inner vocation. Every moment while she is dancing seems to convey a mysterious link between a human being and her creator, between the visible and the invisible. I should think this dancer has much to say to Western dancers.

PAULA BALMA

★ CHICAGO

1951 in Chicago was ushered in with a New Year's Eve performance by the Sadler's Wells Ballet at the Opera House and ushered out with Ballet Theatre dancing a New Year's Eve gala on the same stage. There were also visits from the New York City Ballet and the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo as well as a score of solo artists and concert groups.

The accomplishments of our own dance citizenry are headed by Ruth Page's *Revenge*, the ballet based on *Il Trovatore*, which was premiered in Chicago in January and later remounted with such success in Paris.

The local Ballet Guild was active in presenting new ballets; outstanding was Charles Bockman's *Words Beneath Us*, which used specially written poems by Mark Turbyfill in conjunction with dancing.

Walter Camryn's *Alice in Wonderland* to Rossini's *La Cenerentola* was a charming work with a wealth of painstaking characterisation—acceptable to even the most rabid Lewis Carroll fans. Bentley Stone's *Les Enfants Perdus*, to Ravel music had Stone as a Picasso blue clown, the prime mover in a poetic moody ballet.

ANN BARZEL

★ CANADA

Horizons have broadened over the past year, with new problems—and a few old ones.

The annual Ballet Festival did not actually occur in the last calendar year, but the fourth one is due in May at Toronto. Officially non-competitive, these festivals are most important for they goad groups into action and have been a dominant influence in forming long over-due teacher associations.

Celia Franca's National Ballet Guild made its debut in Toronto last November and may play a strong role in coming months. It is too soon, however, to evaluate its potentialities. The Winnipeg Ballet, a national company in embryo for a decade, was left out of the new guild and warfare seems to be smouldering. Both organisations have much to contend with, primarily cruel distances and lack of intervening U.S. outlets; there is still much pioneering to be done.

Meanwhile the future at least looks varied and Television is around the corner—at least for some parts of Canada.

FRANK COLEMAN



AN ANALYSIS OF CLASSICAL BALLET. PHILIP BATE, LEFT, THE PRODUCER, DISCUSSES THE TELEVISIONING OF SWAN LAKE, ACT II, WITH DOMINI CALLAGHAN, DAVID PALTENGHI AND COMMENTATOR FELICITY GRAY, WHILE WORKING ON THE PROGRAMME BALLET FOR BEGINNERS

TELEVISION TECHNIQUES

By LISA GORDON SMITH

DOMINI CALLAGHAN AND MICHEL DE LUTRY EXPLAIN SOME OF THE PROBLEMS THAT FACE THE TELEVISION DANCER.

OF recent months, there has been but little ballet for televiewers, except for a magnificent production of Pilar Lopez and her Spanish Ballet from Christian Simpson in October, in which he brought his adventurous technique of dance production near to perfection, showing exciting and beautiful pictures on the screen, but in no way limiting, but rather enhancing, the scope of the dancers and the atmosphere of the idiom. In addition to the customary "panning" shots, he drew our attention to various points of the dance by throwing non-relevant parts of the picture out of focus, thus guiding the eye towards that selectivity which is its natural function in a large space, but which most of us have not yet learned to achieve in relation to a small television screen. It now remains for Christian Simpson to demonstrate an equal ability to produce classical ballet with as much effect.

By the time this appears, we shall have seen Philip Bate's December production of *Hoops*, Walter Gore's delightful ballet created for the London Theatre Ballet, which is the well-remembered "Television Ballet Group" of last winter's *Ballet for Beginners*.

Domini Callaghan and Michel de Lutry, on their return from this company's successful season at Eastbourne, gave me their views on the difference between ballet in the television studio and on the stage. The differences apparent to the spectator do not indicate those which are of importance to the dancers; yet if the dancers were not able to adapt themselves to the new conditions, teleballet would be impossible.

Surely this is the most trenchant argument in favour of a permanent group of dancers for this medium? We know that the B.B.C., like ourselves, is having to economise, but they should not forget that wise old saying about not spoiling the ship for a ha'porth of tar!

Domini said that the first thing a dancer has to learn in the studio is that she has little space at her disposal and that every movement must be restricted rather than expanded. Here is an anomaly! "Keep the movement broad" is part of the advice every dancer hears daily from the beginning of her training; in the studio, the reverse applies, yet the same effect must be achieved.

Small wonder that great dancers, making their first studio appearance, seldom do themselves or their ballet complete justice.

The other side of the picture, of course, is that, after a long period of television work, the dancers have difficulty in remembering to "fill the stage", when once more they return to it.

Nor is the life of a television dancer less strenuous. There is a week or so of daily rehearsal for each new production, in which to learn the ballet and be told where the cameras will be placed; for in television ballet the "audience", consisting of mobile cameras, does not stay put in one place, as in the theatre. Then, on "the day", there is a rehearsal for spacing in the actual studio to be used; another for camera positions; another with the orchestra, and then the final, full-dress rehearsal, with live cameras, transmitting over a closed circuit. This goes on, rest or no rest, until all is perfect. Yet, even then, because mechanism is fallible, there may be last-minute changes of instructions, even during the actual transmission, should a camera or any other part of the equipment fall victim to a "technical hitch".

Of the working conditions, Domini said that the two worst aspects are the extreme heat generated by

the arc-lamps and the hardness of the floor. On this last, Michel did not entirely agree with her, as he likes a hard floor; but then, he does not have to dance on *pointes*, nor with ribbons tied tightly round his ankles.

The heat problem, they agreed, was less acute at the Lime Grove studios, which were built for luxury filming and are excellently air-conditioned, than at Alexandra Palace; but the hardness of the floor, which is of concrete, cannot at present be overcome. The weight of the cameras makes a wood floor impracticable; quite apart from the question of how long it would last before breaking, the strain causes the boards to creak—and these creaks would be transmitted, in magnified form, by the sound apparatus.

Michel assured me that he was *not* wearing fur tights in a recent programme, when I had remarked that such was the appearance; it seems that black always gives that illusion on the screen, and so is never used except in an emergency. Domini added that white, also, "explodes" on the screen; hence swans and sylphides have to be dressed in canary yellow or bright pink.

Television ballet appears to be fraught with problems, even for the *corps de ballet*, who, in order to give the appearance of dancing in a straight line, must dance at a mathematically prescribed angle. But whether or not it is possible perfectly to produce "the classics" on this medium—or even whether it is desirable to do so—Domini Callaghan and Michel de Lutry agree with me that there can be a great future for especially created teleballet.

Catherine Littlefield

Catherine Littlefield, a pioneer of American ballet, died in Chicago on November 11th. A pupil of Egorova, Littlefield made her debut on Broadway and returned to Philadelphia in 1926 as leading dancer of the Philadelphia Grand Opera Company. In 1935 she founded the Littlefield Ballet (later renamed the Philadelphia Ballet) and in 1937 the company visited Europe. Their repertoire was composed mainly of ballets choreographed by Catherine Littlefield on American themes: her *Barn Dance* was particularly successful, a gay, light-hearted work rather in the style of Agnes de Mille's later *Rodeo*.

With the entry of the United States into the war, most of the male dancers were called into the armed forces and Catherine Littlefield disbanded her company. For a while she produced the dances for several Broadway musical shows, and in 1942 and after she directed and choreographed many ice spectacles.

Katherine Dunham

Katherine Dunham, with her company of thirty dancers, will be appearing at the Cambridge Theatre for a season commencing on the 8th of January. It will be remembered that Miss Dunham has not appeared in this country since 1948.

Festival Ballet

Festival Ballet were in Monte Carlo for Christmas, working hard on rehearsals for their season in Monaco. The promised *Coppelia* will probably be danced by Nathalie Krassovska and Belinda Wright, with John Gilpin, and it is hoped that Hugh Stevenson will design costumes and decor. There is a possibility that Jerome Robbins will do a ballet for the company and Frederick Ashton is going to revive his beautiful *Mephisto Waltz* for Markova.

NEWS FROM NEW YORK

ARTHUR TODD REVIEWS THE NEW YORK CITY BALLET SEASON

DURING the early weeks of its second fall season, the New York City Ballet's chief novelties were the presentation of three works composed by George Balanchine, its Artistic Director. These were a revival of *Apollo, Leader of the Muses*, a re-staging of *Swan Lake* and the world premiere of *Tyl Ulenspiegel*, one of the most ambitious works yet attempted by this young and continually advancing company.

It would indeed be a pleasant duty to report that all of these Balanchine ballets were a great success. Unfortunately, this is impossible since they each had major weaknesses that were not even overcome by their superb performances. *Tyl Ulenspiegel*, for instance, is but one example. Designing primarily for the superb theatrical talents of Jerome Robbins, which he does brilliantly, Mr. Balanchine has made the rest of the cast little more than a moving background to set off Mr. Robbins' mercurial changes of characterisation. Balanchine, self-admittedly, is not a master at characterisation and thus the rest of the cast seemed lacking in definition and individuality. Moreover, there was little or no actual dancing in the ballet. Rather, it seemed more a case of planned stage action and pantomime. Actually, this is the kind of ballet that Ninette de Valois excels at and it calls for a great sense of the theatre which Mr. Balanchine doesn't seem to have, at least in this instance.

Despite these weaknesses, the work had many attributes. Chief of these was Balanchine's inspiration to show Tyl as the liberator of Flanders from the Spanish invaders under the Duke of Alba. And, aside from a rather left-handed bow to social significance, this ballet gave Catalan artist Esteban Frances a magnificent opportunity to design some stunning costumes and an effective, though busy and cluttered, set. All of this inspiration and artistry provided a rich background for Jerome Robbins' eloquent gifts but inevitably his characterisation was compared to that of Babilée earlier this season. In retrospect, Babilée's stands out as the sharper of the two, possibly because the rest of the action seemed more in key with his role.

The most controversial ballet put on during the early part of the season was Balanchine's "re-staging" of the famous second act of *Swan Lake*. Depending

upon how you regard such a project, it was either inexplicable or impertinent, or both, especially in view of the fact that it is listed as having "Choreography by George Balanchine". Its programme note read, in part, "The famous second act of *Swan Lake* is the only ballet from the traditional repertory danced by the New York City Ballet in its nine seasons at the City Center and the first older work to be revived in sixteen years of collaboration between George Balanchine and Lincoln Kirstein in some fifty works". Though at least sixty to seventy-five per cent. of this ballet appears more than familiar, we are told that "There is little in this present version save atmosphere and score from Ivanov's production. Balanchine's basis is not Ivanov's choreography (or what can be dimly recalled of it), but the great score itself. He has added music from the second version, altering or amplifying. Only the *adagio* and the cygnets' *pas de quatre* are familiar".

Certainly Mr. Balanchine has employed his *corps* to remarkable effect, providing them with much that is vital and inventive. In so doing, however, he has minimised the story of Odette and Prince Siegfried and anyone who was seeing *Swan Lake* for the first time would have great difficulty in fathoming the relationships between Odette, Prince Siegfried and Von Rotbart. Odette, certainly, was meant to be more than a mechanical soloist, yet that is how Balanchine has shaped the role and that is the way it was danced by Maria Tallchief. Her characterisation had none of the drama nor depth that we have come to associate with the role as we have seen it danced by Fonteyn, Grey, Alonso or Hightower, though it was otherwise technically commendable. Nor was André Eglevsky's Prince as communicative or as rounded as that of Youskevitch or Sones.

Since the time of Fokine, we have come to look for far more in a ballet than sheer technical virtuosity yet that is just about all that Balanchine has given us in his *Swan Lake*. The stars of the evening were the *corps* and next was Patricia Wilde in an extremely difficult and brilliant variation as one of the other swan queens. This solo, which had the audience cheering, immediately preceded a less brilliantly designed variation for Maria Tallchief. As a matter of fact, the honours of the evening were not Miss Tallchief's though they should have been.

Obviously, this *Swan Lake* has had time, taste and great deal of money expended on its behalf. Cecil Beaton provided a visually beautiful setting that was inspired by fifteenth century engravings and his costumes for the swans, save for their unbecoming and rather ridiculous tail feathers, were indeed quite elegant. However, with all the great contemporary material that literally cries out for production, it seems odd indeed for the New York City Ballet to make such a retrogressive step at this time. Certainly Jerome Robbins, Antony Tudor and even Mr. Balanchine himself must have other ideas that are more suited to our day. And, since it is doubtful if any company can match the Sadler's Wells' *Swan Lake*, why not, instead, revive a great contemporary masterpiece like Antony Tudor's *Dark Elegies*? Or, better still, let Antony Tudor mount a new work to fit the rich talents of Nora Kaye, Diana Adams and Hugh Laing. A great many of those who believe in the future of the New York City Ballet would much prefer to see this company continuing in such a forward pattern rather than digging into the past for something that is no longer pertinent to our period. One had somewhat the same feeling about the revival of Balanchine's *Apollo, Leader of the Muses*, which, except for its superb performance by Maria Tallchief, Tanaquil LeClercq and Diana Adams, seemed dated and obscure. André Eglevsky no longer has the youth nor appearance for the role of Apollo and he certainly does not dance it half so well as Youskevitch used to for Ballet Theatre. However, it was interesting, at least, to see this twenty-three-year-old ballet again as an example of

the young Balanchine's choreography though it doesn't begin to compare to his *Prodigal Son* which came a year later. One could be grateful, too, for the opportunity it gave Diana Adams to prove again that she is the most lyrically musical ballerina that we now have in America.

Two more works were added to the repertoire before the close of the season. One was a revival of Antony Tudor's masterwork, *Lilac Garden*, for Nora Kaye and Hugh Laing. The other was the world premiere of Jerome Robbins' newest work, *The Pied Piper*, set to the music of Aaron Copland's *Clarinet Concerto*, which was originally commissioned by Benny Goodman. Reviews of both these works, as well as a summary of the entire season, will appear in the next issue.

P. W. Manchester

WRITES ON SWAN LAKE AND A FILM.

THE new solo which Balanchine has arranged for Siegfried in his presentation of *Swan Lake*, Act 2, performed by the New York City Ballet reawakens the endless speculation as to exactly what music Tchaikovsky did, or did not, write for his three great ballets. Every ballet company that performs one or other of them in their entirety or in excerpts seems to be able to produce some hitherto unheard portion of music.

IRINA BARONOVA (CENTRE) AND THE BALLET THEATRE CORPS DE BALLET OF 1942 IN THE MEXICAN FILM YOLANDA.
ALSO PRESENT ARE: ROSELLA HIGHTOWER, JOHN KRIZA, FRANK HOBI AND SHIRLEY ECKL,
WHILE THE CAVALIER IS ANTON DOLIN



We all know that the original Moscow production in 1877 was a failure, but it was not performed, musically, as Tchaikovsky wrote it. His score was considered 'too difficult' and 'too symphonic' by Julius Reisinger, the choreographer, and Pauline Karpakova, the first Odette (the name of the first Siegfried is lost to posterity which seems to dispose of him), and they had no scruples in falling back on the safe two-four, three-four and four-four rhythms of the hack ballet composers like Pugni or Minkus with whom they felt at home.

The score was therefore in a very patched and garbled condition by the time Petipa decided to produce an entirely new version in St. Petersburg in 1895. Since Tchaikovsky had died two years previously the task of cleaning up the score was given to Riccardo Drigo who was then the ballet conductor at the Maryinsky Theatre. Drigo certainly dredged away the accumulations but he also incorporated various small pieces by Tchaikovsky including a Children's Suite which he had written for his small nephews and nieces and which, because of this, no longer exists as a separate work. (The Dance of the Four Little Swans comes from this Suite so possibly it is no great loss).

Some years ago the Tchaikovsky Foundation went to the enormous trouble of tracing the complete score as the composer wrote it. This is published and available to anyone who would really like to know exactly how Tchaikovsky would have liked it to sound.

Balanchine studied this definitive score when preparing his production and found a dance which had never been heard anywhere marked by Tchaikovsky 'Prince's Variation' and it is this which he has used for Eglevsky's solo.

There is enough music still unused from this *Swan Lake* score to make another complete Tchaikovsky ballet—which may possibly give some choreographer an idea.

* * *

I cannot remember whether or not the Mexican film, *Yolanda*, made in 1942 with Baronova and the Ballet Theatre Company ever had a London showing. If it had, I never saw it and it must have disappeared from view very quickly. It never did have a showing in the United States but was recently seen at an out of the way New York cinema under a new title, *Toast to Love*. Technically it is just about as poor as a film very well can be but, perhaps because of it, the dance sequences give a far better idea of the respective ballets than anything I have ever seen. If the Mexicans had then known anything about cutting, camera angles, montages, panning, trucking, trick shots and all the other fancy gimmicks we

would not have had the adagios from *Aurora's Wedding* and *Swan Lake* photographed absolutely straight so that we really do know exactly how Baronova and Dolin danced them in 1942.

Most interesting of all, perhaps, for English audiences who never saw it, is the extract from Nijinska's version of *La Fille Mal Gardée*. Baronova dances a solo entirely on point in which the difficulties are only exceeded by the wonderful ease and grace with which she dismisses them. What a dancer she was and how enchanting to look at! The company is seen in the Ribbon Waltz, filmed either straight on or from above without any nonsense and it gives an eye-opening picture of this amazing company at that time. Ballet lovers today seeing the film would have great fun picking out the very young Nora Kaye, Rosella Hightower, Muriel Bentley, John Kriza and so on, then romping in the *corps de ballet*.

If this film does not seem to be showing up anywhere in London I hope the London Ballet Circle or the New London Film Society will try to get hold of it or see if it is possible to obtain the ballet sequences only. The naivete and general amateurishness of the picture itself is more than compensated for when it comes to those ballet shots. They are the answer to the people who think that filming a ballet practically straight as it is danced on the stage is not a possibility for record purposes.

THERE NEEDS NO GHOST . . .

(Continued from page 4)

virility. Deprived of this quality the basic poverty and restricted emotional range of the native dance is monotonously apparent. Once and only once does Massine's creative genius reassert itself in the course of the ballet, and that is during the exquisite delicacy of the children's prayer dance.

Mr. Ian Whyte's music and the settings and decor by Messrs. Robert Colquhoun and Robert MacBride are never less than adequate and always tastefully discreet. But they cannot truthfully be called memorable. The talents of these distinguished artists also gives the impression of being muted—even emasculated—for the occasion. Given a more purposeful direction and stimulated by a genuine impulse to dramatic expression it is more than likely that they would have achieved a vital contribution to the national stage.

The Sadler's Wells Company offers its new production with enthusiasm and brio. But for all its devotion it cannot infuse so poor a ghost with any semblance of reality. Massine's unique contribution to the ballet of our time ended some twelve years ago; it is a pity that our repertoire should give sanctuary only to its shadows.



ALICIA MARKOVA AS THE SUGAR PLUM FAIRY—A STUDY FROM
GORDON ANTHONY'S NEW BOOK

Balletomane's Bookshelf

ALICIA MARKOVA, by GORDON ANTHONY, with
an Appreciation by Dame Adeline Genée-Isitt,
D.B.E., D.Mus., M.I.etA., B.M. Phoenix House
Ltd., London. 15s.

How fortunate it is that the camera, when used with a combination of skill and imagination, can record for us and future generations Markova's very individual and insubstantial qualities of lightness, fragility and precision.

In the past Mr. Gordon Anthony's imagination too often took the upper hand and some of his work was marred by the intrusion of extraneous effects, such as cut-out swans, isolated architectural features and weird shadows. However, except for a few rickety stairs, some overpoweringly heavy shadows, and a particularly nasty little plaster figure on page 93, skill has this time triumphed and Mr. Anthony has assembled from his collection a fine batch of photographs of Markova in her greatest and most memorable roles.

Included in this album are photographic records of those wonderful performances given at Covent Garden in 1948 when, with her cavalier Anton Dolin, the English ballerina appeared as Guest Artist with

the Sadler's Wells Ballet in *Swan Lake*, *The Sleeping Beauty* and *Giselle*.

If only the photographer had been resident in America during the early 1940s! To have included a record of those fabled years when Markova was associated with Ballet Theatre would have provided us with an even more remarkable picture of this great dancer's career.

Dame Adeline Genée has written an appreciation as neat and precise as Markova's own footwork.

* * *

DRAMA, ITS COSTUME AND DECOR, -by
JAMES LAVER. Studio, London. 30s.

Mr. James Laver's triumph is that he has almost succeeded in giving this book an entertainment value in equal ratio to its range. Other writers, even with the varied and colourful theatrical scene for their subject, have failed in this respect but Mr. Laver's survey of the decor and costumes of the European drama over some two thousand odd years is fascinating as well as erudite.

Although it is not primarily intended for the balletomane, no ballet enthusiast can fail to be impressed by it. Admittedly his favourite art makes few *entrées*, but it is good to have developments in ballet design related to the rest of the theatrical picture.

The book may have a double value, for in addition to providing present pleasure it may well tempt readers to the Victoria and Albert Museum to discover for themselves that great national collection of theatrical material from which many of the illustrations for Mr. Laver's book are taken. The plates are produced in accordance with the high standard always expected from a "Studio" book. Especially interesting are some designs for decor by Jovarra and Thornhill, both unusual artists to be included in a book of this kind.

PETER REVITT.

School of Russian Ballet

The School of Russian Ballet (Chelsea) gave their annual performance at the Institut Francais on Tuesday, December 11th, and presented a programme remarkable for its professional quality and good arrangement. Pupils of all ages, from 5 to 21, participated and most of the solos were arranged by Barbara Vernon, principal teacher at the School and a prime mover in the efforts being made in this country to continue the training methods of the great Nicolas Legat.

THE DANCING HANDS

By VIVIAN COX

THE Hand Ballet of the *Compagnie Yves Joly* has held audiences enthralled for just a year, and all those who have seen their repertoire in the "Existentialist" Club—*La Rose Rouge*—in St. Germain des Près, or the extracts presented by the B.B.C. in a recent television programme will be surprised to know that it all happened by accident—almost by mistake. Here is the story, as told me by Yves Joly recently, when his Company paid a flying visit to London to play in a film for Sydney Box.

Yves and Hélène Joly, with Georges Tournaire and Dominique Gimet, started as a puppet act in a circus show. Their repertoire, evolved over ten years, had become more and more stylised until the puppets were but pieces of cartridge paper and odds and ends of properties which assumed a human personality only as their masters manoeuvred life into them. They were experimenting with a scene in which one of their puppets had a nightmare. From the darkness of the black velvet surrounds, disembodied ghostly hands materialised and terrified the dreamer. The rehearsals were so exciting that the dreamer was eliminated and the hands remained. So *Les Mains Joly* were born.

It is impossible to convey in words the enchantment of their half-hour of handiwork. The grace and precision of movement is rivalled only by the ingenuity and imagination which goes into the composition of their various items. Some are purely abstract, others are astonishingly representational. The white gloved hands hold the spectators fixed and end by mesmerising them. The spell defines analysis.

The programme begins with an "arabesque" for six hands, played to a brisk syncopated musical accompaniment, the various patterns forming and dissolving with a bewildering precision unrivalled by the most expertly drilled *corps de ballet*. *Fond de Mer*, to music by Satie, is a drifting tone poem, in which the transparent wavering tendrils of the submarine vegetation frame the eternal struggle for life and survival of the fittest which typify this watery microcosm. In this piece the eight hands shed all connection with their human origin and become all the marine beasts and growths that the spectator can imagine.

La Lutte, a two-handed solo by Yves Joly, is a physical *tour de force*—when I first saw it I could not believe that it was a solo. It is played without

accompaniment. A big bully of a hand meets a cunning, more active rival who bars his way. The two fight, first fencing like boxers for an opening, then exchanging occasional blows, and finally grappling in deadly interlock, rolling over and over, until the smaller hand is killed and tossed scornfully aside by the great tough, who continues on his way.

Here for the first time the hands have identifiable human personalities. Every move gives a hint of character. You can hear the silent growls of frustration when the road is blocked. You can sense the mortal nature of the struggle. You can read every emotion in the slow brain of the murderer, as, exhausted and incredulous, he inspects the body of his inert victim. You can sense his panic before he decides to fling the body into the gutter, and—as it were with a shrug of his shoulders—wash his hands of the whole affair.

By now the audience will believe everything—and *Bathing Scene* is the comic *piece de resistance*. Here, without any attempt at representation, the hands *are* people. When the bathers undress for their guilty dip, the man impatiently tugging off his clothes so as to help his girl friend with her inaccessible buttons, and at last the gloves are off and lying in a neat pile, the two naked hands stand shivering on the brink, quite shamefully nude and defenceless. It is the first time we have seen the hands ungloved and, to the prudish in the audience, the result is quite shocking. What more can one say to testify to the utter conquest of *Les Mains Joly*?

But you must see them for yourself to appreciate them. I only wish you could go behind the scenes as we did when we were "shooting" on them. From the front all is ordered and calm. Behind, the four artists weave silently and intricately a pattern no less fascinating to watch. There is no confusion. It is a ballet in itself—beautifully designed, co-ordinated and rehearsed, each individual contributing to the total effect.

There is only one other remarkable fact. After the final curtain Yves Joly takes a call with his three colleagues. They stand shyly bowing to the roars of delighted acclamation.

And not one of them has any idea what to do with his hands.



Photo : William MacQuitty

THE COMPAGNIE YVES JOLY TURN THEIR HANDS INTO AN OCTOPUS

Ballet Workshop

MICHAEL Charnley's *Bagatelle*, to pleasant music by Howard Ferguson, opened the ninth programme and confirmed the impression made by the same choreographer's *No Lips of Comfort* that here is a talent to watch and to foster. Given the right encouragement I see no reason why Charnley should not provide that fresh outlook which is so badly needed in our ballet today. English dancers, never very good at putting their own personalities across, like to hide behind the mask of character, or behind the impersonality of the discipline demanded by point shoes. Charnley, by putting his dancers into unblocked shoes, forced them to think afresh about the accepted conventions of classical ballet, and the result, particularly with Sonya Hana, was electrifying.

Venus and the Bridegroom which followed was a Masque with words by Ashley Dukes, music by Michael Hobson and production and choreography by David Ellis. On the first performance I had the impression that the separate parts of the Masque did

not quite 'jell' together. This has probably been remedied since.

Walter Gore's *Hoops*, which ended the programme, was without doubt the most accomplished work of the evening. It was completely self-assured and professional. Gore knew what he wanted, and he got it. Malcontents may ask whether such assurance really deserves a place in what is an experimental organisation. But surely even the malcontents could not help enjoying this typical piece of Gore at his best. Here are displayed all his preoccupations with props, with diagonal lines of dance, with exits and entrances which seem to enlarge the stage because they suggest that its boundaries are well off-stage. Gore's dancers, you feel, do not stop dancing when they disappear. The stage just happens to be that section of their ground which comes within our limited range of sight.

Domini Callaghan and Michel de Lutry deserve special praise for their dancing and for their interpretation of Gore's special brand of wry, subtle humour. The ballet is, of course, in the repertory of the London Theatre Ballet. FRANK JACKSON.

Three Ballet Films

The London Ballet Circle on November 20th organised a programme of French ballet films in the attractive small theatre at the Institut Français. Unlike most such small-scale ventures, the show was most efficiently organised; all the promised films were shown and none of them broke down.

Unhappily, however, none of them were particularly remarkable as examples of filmed ballet. Lifar's *Mephisto Valse* and *A là Mémoire d'un Héros* were seen on the stage in London in 1946 and they have been translated to the screen with remarkable fidelity; photographed with care and high technical ability they emerge in all their embarrassing paucity of invention and excess of gesticulation. Ludmilla Tcherina, who was so good as a dancer with a real character to portray in *Un Revenant*, looked luscious but acted rather absurdly in both films.

The third film, *Ballerine*, had been shown previously at the Edinburgh Festival and is in the nature of a full-length feature. Directed by Ludwig Berger, it attempts to portray the maturing effects of three dreams upon the character of a young dancer. Her first appearance in a provincial theatre is marked by failure, then after her dreams and a disillusioning love affair she dances again with new depth of feeling and is a success. The best episodes were the dream sequences, for the real world events were highly incredible. Many of the dreams were much too protracted but there were places where the helpless, shut-in terror of nightmare was wonderfully captured and through them all the ballerina Violette Verdy (now of the Ballets des Champs Elysées) danced with touching simplicity and charm. Of the other characters, Nicolas Orloff was entirely delightful as a Russian dancer and many of the audience must have remembered with nostalgia his wonderful performances with the Original Ballet Russe at Covent Garden in 1947. The music, under the direction of a great ballet conductor, Roger Desormières, was excellent and the sets a fair compromise between filmic splendour and theatrical possibility. Yvonne Georgi's choreography was generally unaffectedly simple and quite effective. The whole concoction added up to very little but there were moments of considerable pleasure—and not every dance film yields that much.

MARY CLARKE.

Ballet Weddings

Our best wishes and congratulations are extended to Elaine Fiffeld and John Lanchbery of the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet, who were married in Los Angeles on Monday, 17th December, and also to Frank Staff and Jacqueline St. Clair, who were married in London on Saturday, December 29th.

UDAY SHANKAR

UDAY Shankar, Amala, and their company were in London, at the Prince's Theatre, for two weeks before flying to New York for Christmas. This notice must, alas, be as short as their stay here; would it could have been as long as the intervals between items on the first night!

Uday Shankar is a creative spirit and it is, therefore, useless to criticise him for departing from strict tradition. His programme, while based chiefly on the technique of Kathakali and on folk dance, is an attempt at synthesis, not only of the chief Indian dance styles, but even of the outlooks of East and West. This tremendous effort owes its success to the intelligence and artistic integrity which are evident in all Shankar does. With a lesser artist the results might be disastrous.

This applies not only to the choreography but also to the music which is composed to fit each item and accompanies the action as closely as does the soundtrack of a film, being sometimes melodic and rhythmic and sometimes purely descriptive. One of the musical interludes—a concert of percussion instruments of the most exotic kind—gets as near to an orchestra, as we understand it, as I have ever heard in Indian music.

UDAY SHANKAR



(Continued from previous page)

I have space now only to praise briefly the beauty of the costumes, the good work of the *corps de ballet* (dressed in a more Western fashion than is customary), and the sweet personalities of Uday Shankar and Mala, all of which help to make a very pleasant evening's entertainment.

F.J.

A Protest

The following letter is full of very honest indignation. We think the writer deserves a platform for her views and are glad to publish her letter. It suggests that the subject is one on which the regular audience at Covent Garden feels strongly and if any other balletgoers wish to contribute to the argument we shall be equally glad to print their views.

To the Editor, *Ballet Today*.
Madam,

I and many of the regular ballet audience at Covent Garden have seen with growing indignation the ungenerous, ungrateful and unworthy efforts of certain critics to break the hearts and spirits of the very gallant girl soloists of the Sadler's Wells Ballet Company.

During the last two seasons they have been struggling against almost overwhelming odds, as a look at the full seasons' programmes would show to any regular patron. Three of the leading ballerinas have been wholly or partly incapacitated; the ranks of the regular soloists have been depleted by resignations and transfers to the Theatre Ballet; and the *corps de ballet*, owing to illness and accidents, has been largely composed for most of the time of students newly graduated from the School and with as yet little stage experience. There is not much room for an adventurous spirit in casting in these circumstances. But the little band of the remaining soloists have carried on with admirable fortitude and most praiseworthy loyalty to the Company, to the public and to each other. They have gone cheerfully into the *corps de ballet* when sudden illness has made gaps there; they have done their own work and, in emergency, each others'; and they have stepped at short notice, and in all humility, into the shoes of the great ones when sheer necessity, and not the caprice of the casting director, has compelled them to do so. The remaining ballerinas have had to be saved as much as possible. It has not been a case of "Anybody can Try Anything", but of "Someone has simply got to, if the show is to go on". And in view of the lack of time for rehearsal in these awkward emergencies, naturally it is the girls who are quick to learn and

therefore reliable who have had to bear the brunt of the extra work. And they have done it bravely when dancers of more "temperament" and less integrity might have been reduced to screaming hysterics. If their work has at times lacked the snap and sparkle one might expect, it has been because they have been terribly tired.

O Critics, be a little kind! Give these youngsters a hand. They have worked so very, very hard, loyal to the slogan "The Show must go on". Deplore as much as you like the run of bad luck which has decimated the Company and deprived the survivors of adequate time for rehearsal, but don't shoot the soloists! They are doing their valiant best and they do deserve something more friendly than the back of your contemptuous hands in their faces. Not so are sensitive young artists encouraged to give of their best.

I am, Madam, yours faithfully,

AILEEN PULLEN.

71 Ridgeway, Waddon,
Nr. Croydon, Surrey.

WHILE THEY LAST

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